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MAKING YOUR VOICE  
HEARD IN OLYMPIA!



REPRESENTATIVE  
**JIM BUCK**  
24TH DISTRICT



## 2001 SESSION OUTLOOK

### Challenges, opportunities face 57th Legislature

Dear Friends,

On Jan. 8, we embarked on another historic legislative session in Olympia. The 105-day session is the first of the new century, and for a second time in a row the state House of Representatives is tied at 49-49 — the chamber equally divided between Republicans and Democrats. As one Capitol veteran put it, "It's like lightning striking the same guy twice during the same storm."

Shared control in the legislative process wasn't easy during the last two years, but we made it work. The experience of doing the people's business in a 49-49 tie underscored how sharing power can actually be a very positive tool in negotiating solutions to difficult issues. Finding common ground requires cooperation and commitment by both sides of the aisle to bridge partisan differences. It was often not a smooth or easy process, but we've had two years to get accustomed to what amounts to a textbook example of divided government.

**This session preview is an overview of some of the issues we will be addressing during the next few months — issues that will have an impact on you and your family.**

If you have concerns or questions about issues we're dealing with this session or about state government, please call my office or write a letter. I am always glad to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Rep. Jim Buck  
Chairman, House Republican Caucus



## REP. JIM BUCK • SERVING THE 24TH DISTRICT

### BUDGET WILL TAKE CENTER STAGE

We've got some big-ticket items to address this year, not the least of which is forging a general fund budget in the face of a short-fall of more than \$1 billion in the coming biennium. In fact, the cost of simply maintaining current services will be greater than the state's legal spending limit. The budget-writing scenario is dramatically impacted by the education initiatives approved by voters. For example, Initiative 732 (to provide annual pay raises for teachers and public-school and college staff), is expected to cost more than \$345 million and must be funded out of the operating budget. There are also other basic policy assumptions to be factored in, including higher costs for health care — projected to grow by about 18 percent.

Gov. Locke has proposed a \$22.7 billion budget that many of us believe could drag the state into a financial emergency and set the stage for a possible tax increase. Not only does the Locke budget include **\$1.2 billion in new spending**, but it would alter the voter-approved spending limit and use almost half of the state's \$1 billion reserve. **A downturn in the economy and we're going to be in serious trouble.**

A little history illustrates our concern. When he was still a legislator and chair of the former House Ways and Means Committee, Locke engineered a budget that spent **\$695 million** more than expected revenue and led to the biggest tax increase in state history in 1993. Under the proposal offered by the governor last month, expenditures would exceed expected revenue by **\$425 million**. We must work to ensure that the painful lesson of 1993 is not repeated.

**Washington voters sent a potent message when they approved the spending limit (I-601) in 1993. They underscored that message with the passage of I-695 in 1999. We must not break faith with the taxpayers of Washington who have made it clear they want and expect us to control the growth of government**

### and maintain responsible budget policies.

The budget-writing decisions the Legislature faces in the months ahead are not unlike the hard budgeting choices facing families and businesses throughout the state. Washington's citizens understand how to set priorities and manage their personal and business finances, but that concept has so far eluded the governor.

Taking a page from the example of tough discipline in managing family finances, the unusually difficult budgeting process this year will require broad consensus-building by both the governor and the Legislature to identify efficiencies, set sound priorities, hold spending in check, and respect the message from the taxpayers who have directed us to do more with less.

### REVISING THE PRIMARY SYSTEM



Last June, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down California's blanket-primary elections as unconstitutional.

Washington's system is identical to California's. Under current law, Washingtonians can cast ballots for primary candidates regardless of party affiliation. The Supreme Court changed that by holding

that political parties have the right to determine which voters may participate in their primaries. Most states use either an "open" primary, in which voters select one party's ballot, or a "closed" primary, in which voters must register by political party to vote in that party's primary. I expect this will be among the most contentious issues of the 2001 legislative session.

***Primary elections are held to allow each party to choose its candidates for office. My position has been that if the parties want a closed primary, then they should reimburse the taxpayers for the cost of the election.***

### SHORELINE RULES

New shoreline management rules were signed in November by Tom Fitzsimmons, director of the Department of Ecology. In addition to being cumbersome and costly, the new rules impose drastic changes in the way Washington shorelines are governed and dramatically affect landowners' ability to manage their property. In some instances, these regulations will result in unconstitutional takings of property, or limiting a person's ability to subdivide his or her land, potentially jeopardizing generations of hard work and sacrifice. Rural counties will be hit hard as local governments (already struggling from the impact of I-695) face an un-

### A PERSONAL NOTE ...

This session marks a new chapter in my service as your state representative. In November, I was elected chairman of the House Republican Caucus — one of eight positions comprising the Republican leadership slate. In addition to presiding over caucus meetings, I will also be involved in developing caucus strategy and policy decisions. Although I will continue to work as a member of the Natural Resources Committee, I have stepped aside as co-chairman. This decision has allowed me to accept an appointment to the budget-writing Appropriations Committee. Additionally, I will serve on the Rules Committee.

I am gratified by the vote of confidence from my colleagues and for the opportunity to serve as a member of our leadership team. And though I am taking on new challenges, my primary responsibilities as your legislator have not changed. Representing you and the interests of the 24th District is still my top priority.

# 2001 SESSION OUTLOOK

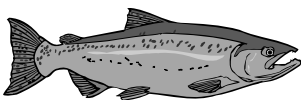


funded mandate to shoulder the costs of updating their master shorelines plans.

**Ecology has clearly ignored legislative direction and overstepped its authority, and many lawmakers have expressed interest in sponsoring legislation that would bring the department under tighter rein. There's a disturbing arrogance about an agency creating laws without legislative review. In a representative form of government, the department's conduct has been short-sighted and oppressive.**

## SALMON RESTORATION

Another factor driving the budget crisis is the ongoing cost of administering the state's salmon-restoration efforts – potentially the most expensive and ambitious effort to protect a wild animal in the world. A key player in ensuring that we get the most bang for the buck for recovery efforts is the Northwest Power Planning Council, the four-state agency with the job of balancing salmon and wildlife protection with electricity production. The council's fish and wildlife program includes acquisition of land for habitat conservation, and while habitat conservancy is laudable, land purchases (and removal of land from public tax rolls) ought to be weighed against the need to ensure that resources get to restoration projects that will be most effective and deliver the best results – such as restoring stream conditions to ensure clean, unobstructed spawning and rearing habitat. **The Legislature needs to coordinate state recovery activities with the council so ratepayers know that dollars spent on fish and wildlife recovery are being spent wisely and in the most effective way possible.**



*Rep. Buck discusses strategy with legislative colleagues on the House floor.*

## PROTECTING HYDROELECTRICITY

While our state's energy needs will be a major topic of debate this session, a regional effort is under way to protect our region's power supplies. During a meeting of the Legislative Council on River Governance in Idaho, I voted with delegates from other western states to pass a resolution opposing the sale of Northwest electricity to California. While Northwest hydroelectric generating capacity has been reduced because of dry weather and declining river levels, Bonneville Power and other Northwest utilities are under Department of Energy orders to sell power to California in an effort to alleviate electrical shortages and shore up the rapidly deteriorating financial condition of the state's power utilities.

**The crisis in California resulted from that state's own re-regulation, increasing population, and environmental regulations that have curtailed development of new power plants by the state's two utility giants, Pacific Gas &**

**Electric Co. and Southern California Edison. The chaos created by California's electrical emergency has generated a crisis for the entire West.**

Council members from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana are concerned that sharing power to ease California's electricity crunch may create a domino effect for Northwest consumers.



Gov. Locke has vetoed proposals for tax breaks to companies that want to build power plants, and to companies that upgrade their facilities to produce more energy. **While conservation is necessary in the short term, that alone will not meet our long-term needs.** We need to build more power plants to meet future growth demands. To ensure an adequate and affordable supply for future generations, I think the Legislature and the governor need to take a fresh, serious look at a sales-tax exemption for development of new power resources.



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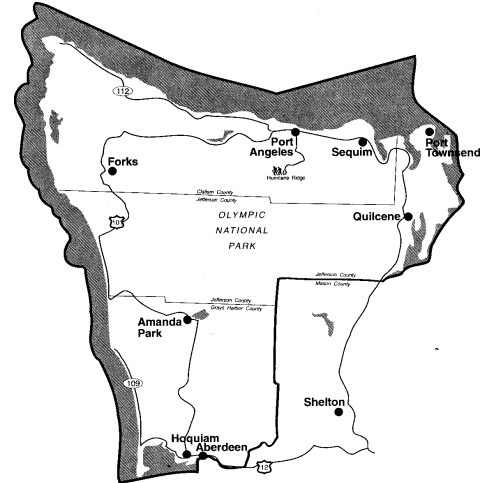
## PROMOTING THE AMERICAN DREAM FOR ALL

House Republicans have drafted legislation to fulfill our "**Pledge to the Citizens of Washington.**" Cornerstones of the pledge include controlling property taxes, improving the quality of education and accountability in public schools, and assisting seniors with the costs of prescription drugs.

### *2001 House Republicans' Pledge to the Citizens of Washington:*

- ♦ **Lower the tax burden for those who need it most.**
  - Phase out the state property tax levy to help homeowners and renters.
- ♦ **Leave no child behind**
  - Empower parents whose children are in failing or violent schools with state-funded choices.
  - Continue reforming schools by establishing higher standards, accountability and compensation based on performance.
- ♦ **Reduce traffic congestion and improve safety**
  - Prioritize transportation by dedicating existing transportation-related sales tax revenue to new road projects.
- ♦ **Protect neighborhoods and improve safety**
  - Make methamphetamine production and distribution a "strike" and increase the jail time for those who expose children to the drug.
- ♦ **Ensure access to affordable prescription drugs**
  - Ensure that seniors have access to medication through state assistance.
- ♦ **Preserve our natural resources**
  - Maintain high environmental standards to protect clean air and water and promote salmon recovery through effective, science-based solutions at the local level.
  - Better manage our water resources by increasing storage capacity.
- ♦ **Make government more citizen-centered and accountable**
  - Require rules adopted by state agencies that invoke the force of law be approved by the Legislature prior to permanent implementation.

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